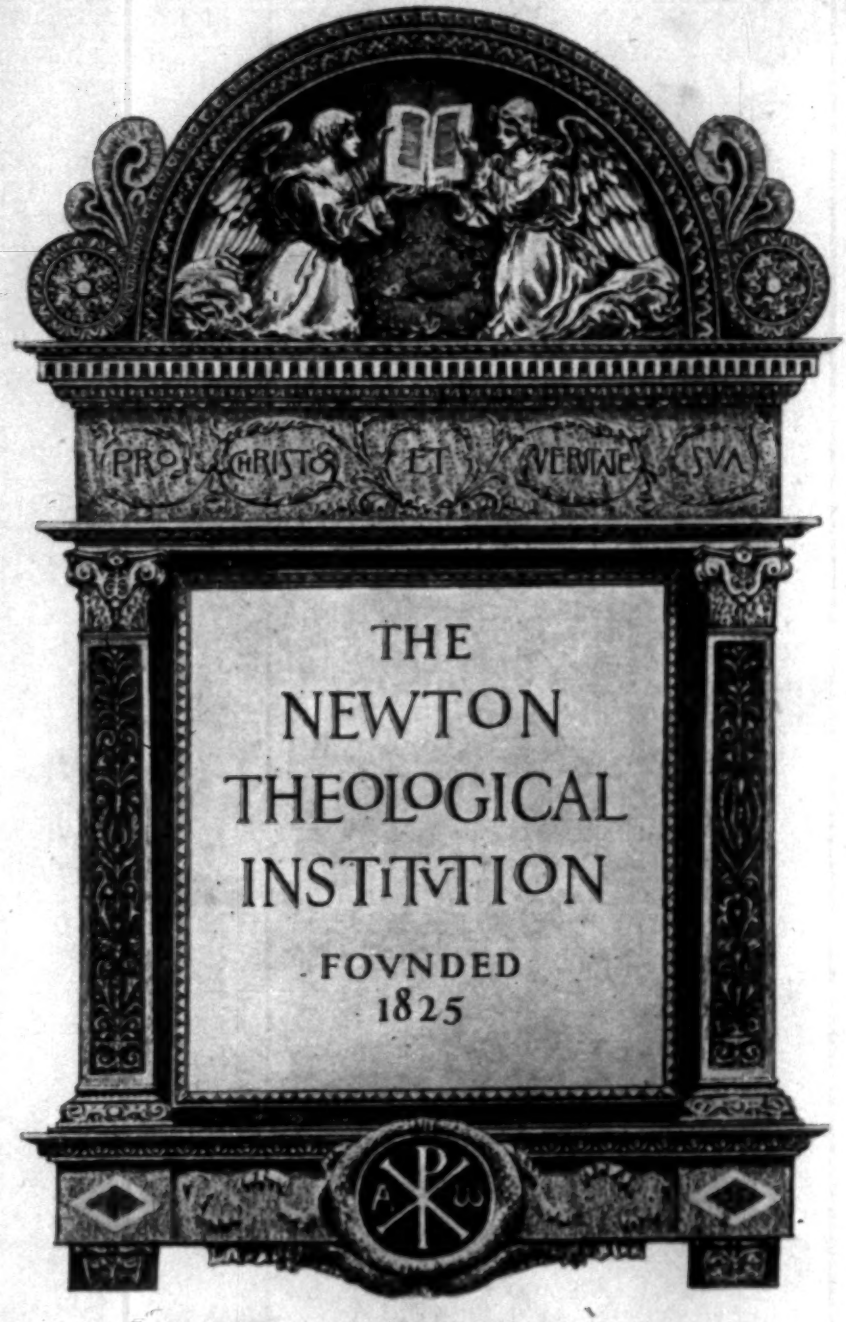
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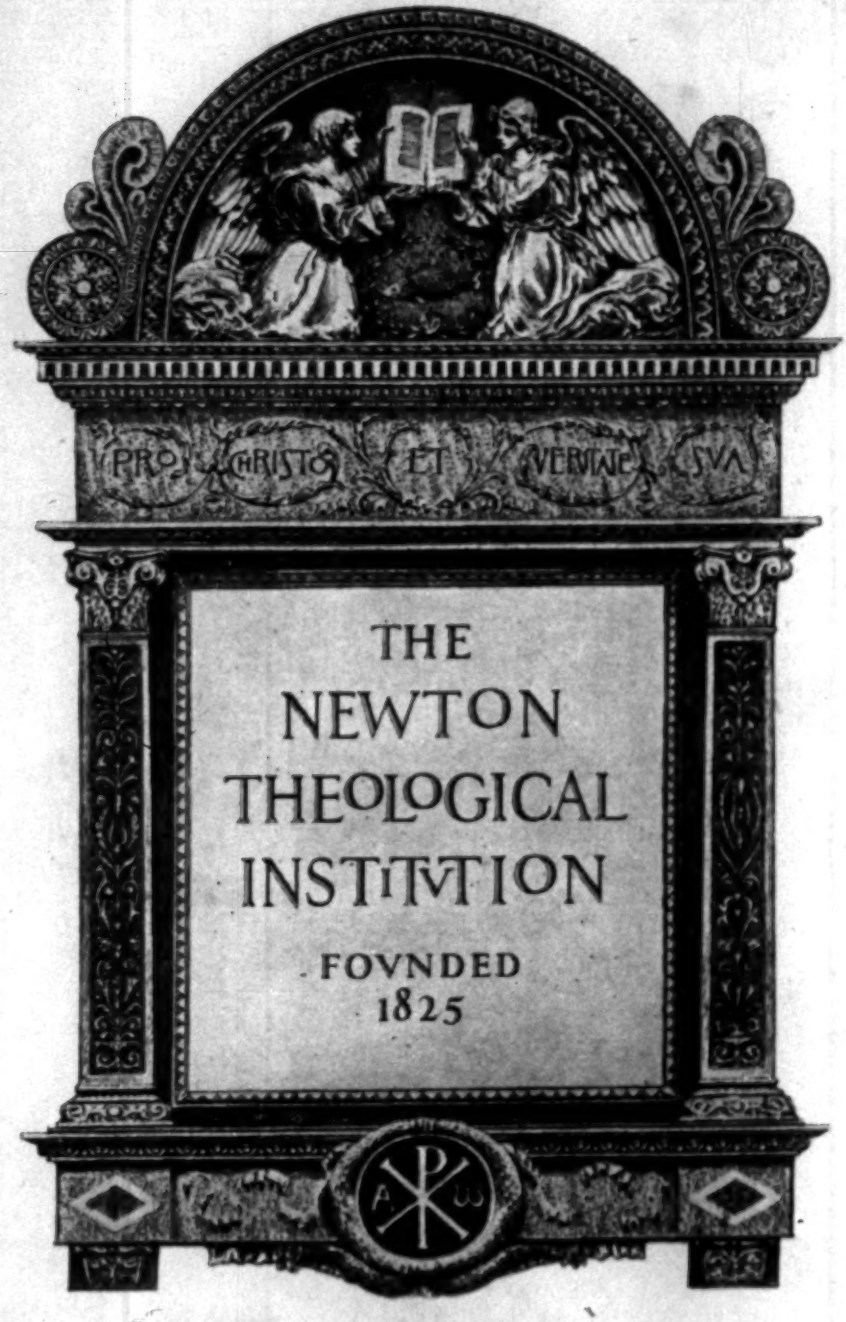
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AN APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY,

Againſt the Oppreſſions of the preſent Day.

By Iſaac Backus.

Brethren, ye have been called unto Liberty; only uſe not Liberty for an occaſion to the Fleſh, but by love ſerve one another. GAL. V. 13.

BOSTON:

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AN

APPEAL

TO THE

PUBLIC, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

INASMUCH as there appears to us a real need of ſuch an appeal, we would previouſly offer a few thoughts concerning the general nature of liberty and government, and then ſhew wherein it appears to us, that our religious rights are encroached upon in this land.

It is ſuppoſed by multitudes, that in ſubmitting to government we give up ſome part of our liberty, becauſe they imagine that there is ſomething in their nature incompatible with each other. But the word of truth plainly ſhews, that man firſt loſt his freedom by breaking over the rules of government; and that thoſe who now

now ſpeak great *ſwelling words* about *liberty*, while they *deſpiſe government*, are themſelves *ſervants of corruption*. What a dangerous error, yea, what a root of all evil then muſt it be, for men to imagine that there is any thing in the nature of true government that interferes with true and full liberty! A grand cauſe of this evil is, ignorance of what we are, and where we are; for did we view things in their true light, it would appear to be as abſurd and dangerous, for us to aſpire after any thing beyond our capacity, or out of the rule of our duty, as it would for the frog to ſwell till he burſts himſelf in trying to get as big as the ox, or for a beaſt or fowl to dive into the fiſhes element till they drown themſelves. *Godlineſs with contentment is great gain*: But they that *will* take a contrary courſe *fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which* DROWN *men in deſtruction and perdition.* 1 Tim. 6. 6, 9.

The true liberty of man is, to know, obey and enjoy his Creator, and to do all the good unto, and enjoy all the happineſs with and in his fellow-creatures that he is capable of; in order to which the law of love was written in his heart, which carries in it's nature union and benevolence to Being in general, and to each being in particular, according to it's nature and excellency, and to it's relation and connexion to and with the ſupreme Being, and ourſelves. Each rational ſoul, as he is a part of the whole ſyſtem of rational beings, ſo it was and is, both his duty and his liberty to regard the good of the whole in all his actions. To love ourſelves, and truly

truly to ſeek our own welfare, is both our liberty and our indiſpenſible duty; but the conceit that man could advance either his honor or happineſs, by diſobedience inſtead of obedience, was firſt injected by the *father of lies*, and all ſuch conceits ever ſince are as falſe as he is.

Before man imagined that ſubmiſſion to government, and acting ſtrictly by rule was confinement, and that breaking over thoſe bounds would enlarge his knowledge and happineſs, how clear were his ideas! (even ſo as to give proper names to every creature) and how great was his honor and pleaſure! But no ſooner did he tranſgreſs, than inſtead of enjoying the boldneſs of innocency, and the liberties of paradiſe, he ſneaks away to hide himſelf; and inſtead of clear and juſt ideas, he adopted that maſter of all abſurdities (which his children follow to this day) of thinking to hide from OMNICIENCY, and of trying to deceive HIM who knows every thing! Inſtead of good and happineſs, he felt evil, guilt and miſery; and in the room of concord was wrangling, both againſt his Creator and his fellow-creature, even ſo that ſhe who was before loved as his *own fleſh*, he now *accuſes* to the great Judge. By which it appears, that the notion of man's gaining any dignity or liberty by refuſing an intire ſubmiſſion to government, was ſo deluſive, that inſtead of it's advancing him to be *as Gods*, it ſunk him down into a way of acting like the beaſts and like the devil! the beaſts are actuated by their ſenſes and inclinations, and the devil purſues his deſigns by deceit and violence. With malicious reflections upon God,

and

and flattering pretences to man, he drew him down to gratify his eyes and his taſte with forbidden fruit : and he had no ſooner revolted from the authority of heaven, than the beauty and order of his family was broken ; he turns accuſer againſt the wife of his boſom, his firſt ſon murders the next, and then lies to his Maker to conceal it ; and that lying murderer's poſterity were the firſt who broke over the order of marriage which God had inſtituted ; and things proceeded from bad to worſe, till all fleſh had corrupted his way, and the earth was filled with violence, ſo that they could no longer be borne with, but by a juſt vengeance were all ſwept away, only one family.

Yet all this did not remove the dreadful diſtemper from man's nature, for the great Ruler of the univerſe directly after the flood, gave this as one reaſon why he would not bring ſuch another while the earth remains, namely, *For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth* ; § ſo that if he was to drown them as often as they deſerved it, one deluge muſt follow another continually. Obſerve well where the diſtemper lies ; evil imaginations have uſurped the place of reaſon and a well informed judgment, and hold them in ſuch bondage, that inſtead of being governed by thoſe noble faculties, they are put to the horrid drugery of *ſeeking out inventions*, for the gratification of *fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul* ; and to guard againſt having theſe worſt of all enemies detected and ſubdued. Enemies which are ſo far from being God's creatures,

§ Gen. 4. 19. and 6. 13, 15. and 8. 21.

tures, that ſtrictly ſpeaking, they have no being at all in themſelves, only are the privation of his creatures well-being; therefore ſin with it's offſpring death, will, as to thoſe who are ſaved, be *ſwallowed up in victory*. Sin is an enemy both to God and man, which was begotten by ſatan, and was conceived and brought forth by man; for luſt when it is conceived bringeth forth ſin, and ſin when it is finiſhed bringeth forth death. ‖

Now how often have we been told, that he is not a freeman but a ſlave, whoſe perſon and goods are not at his own but anothers diſpoſal? And to have foreigners come and riot at our expence and in the fruit of our labours, has often been repreſented to be worſe than death. And ſhould the higher powers appear to deal with temporal oppreſſors according to their deſerts, it would ſeem ſtrange indeed, if thoſe who have ſuffered intolerably by them, ſhould employ all their art and power to conceal them, and ſo to prevent their being brought to juſtice! But how is our world filled with ſuch madneſs concerning ſpiritual tyrants! How far have pride and infidelity, covetouſneſs and luxury, yea deceit and cruelty, thoſe foriegners which came from hell, carried their influence, and ſpread their baneful miſchiefs in our world! Yet who is willing to own that he has been deceived and enſlaved by them? Who is willing honeſtly to bring them forth to juſtice! All acknowledge that theſe enemies are among us, and many complain aloud of the miſchiefs that they do; yet even thoſe who lift their heads ſo high as to laugh at

‖ Eccl. 7. 29. 1 Pet. 2. 11. Jam. 1. 14, 15.

at the atonement of Jeſus, and the powerful influences of the Spirit, and ſlight public & private devotion, are at the ſame time very unwilling to own that they harbour pride, infidelity, or any other of thoſe dreadful tyrants. And nothing but the divine law refered to above, brought home with convincing light and power, can make them truly ſenſible of the ſoul-ſlavery that they are in: and 'tis only the power of the goſpel that can ſet them *free from ſin*, ſo as to become the ſervants of *righteouſneſs*: can *deliver* them from theſe *enemies*, ſo as to *ſerve God in holineſs* all their days. And thoſe who do not thus *know the truth*, and have not been *made free* thereby, ¶ yet have never been able in any country to ſubſiſt long without ſome ſort of government; neither could any of them ever make out to eſtabliſh any proper government without calling in the help of the Deity. However abſurd their notions have been, yet they have found human ſight and power to be ſo ſhort and weak, and able to do ſo little toward watching over the conduct, and guarding the rights of individuals, that they have been forced to appeal to heaven by oaths, and to invoke aſſiſtance from thence to avenge the cauſe of the injured upon the guilty. Hence it is ſo far from being neceſſary for any man to give up any part of his real liberty in order to ſubmit to government, that all nations have found it neceſſary to ſubmit to ſome government in order to enjoy any liberty and ſecurity at all.

We

¶ Rom. 6. 18. Luke 1. 74, 75. John 8. 32.

We are not inſenſible that the general notion of liberty, is for each one to act or conduct as he pleaſes; but that government obliges us to act toward others by law and rule, which in the imagination of many, interferes with ſuch liberty; though when we come to the light of truth, what can poſſibly prevent it's being the higheſt pleaſure, for every rational perſon, to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himſelf, but corruption and deluſion? which, as was before noted, are foreigners and not originally belonging to men. Therefore the divine argument to prove, that thoſe who promiſe liberty while they deſpiſe government are ſervants of corruption is this; *For of whom a* MAN *is overcome, of the ſame is he brought in bondage.* 2 Pet. 2. 18, 19. He is ſo far from being *free* to act the *man*, that he is a *bond-ſlave* to the worſt of tyrants. And not a little of this tyranny is carried on by ſuch an abuſe of language, as to call it liberty, for men to yield themſelves up, to be ſo *fooliſh*, *diſobedient* and *deceived*, as to *ſerve divers luſts and pleaſures.* Tit. 3. 3.

Having offered theſe few thoughts upon the general nature of government and liberty, it is needful to obſerve, that God has appointed two kinds of government in the world, which are diſtinct in their nature, and ought never to be confounded together; one of which is called civil, the other eccleſiaſtical government. And tho' we ſhall not attempt a full explanation of them, yet ſome eſſential points of difference between them are neceſſary to be mentioned, in order truly to open our grievances.

SECTION I.

Some eſſential points of difference between civil and eccleſiaſtical government.

1. The forming of the conſtitution, and appointment of the particular orders and offices of civil government is left to human diſcretion, and our ſubmiſſion thereto is required under the name of their being, the *ordinances of men* for the Lord's ſake. 1 Pet. 2. 13, 14. Whereas in eccleſiaſtical affairs we are moſt ſolemnly warned not to be *ſubject to ordinances, after the doctrines and commandments of men.* Col. 2. 20, 22. And it is evident that He who is the only worthy object of worſhip, has always claimed it as his ſole prerogative, to determine by expreſs laws, what his worſhip ſhall be, who ſhall miniſter in it, and how they ſhall be ſupported. How expreſs were his appointments concerning theſe things by Moſes? And ſo wiſe and good a ruler as Solomon, was not intruſted with any legiſlative power upon either of theſe articles, but had the exact dimenſions of the temple, the *pattern* and *weight* of every veſſel, with the *treaſuries* of the *dedicate things*, and the *courſes* of the *Prieſts and Levites*, all given to him in *writing by the Spirit*, through the hand of his father David. 1 Chron. 28. 11—19. And ſo ſtrict were God's faithful ſervants about theſe matters, that Daniel who in a high office in the Perſian court, behaved ſo well that his moſt envious and crafty foes, could find no occaſion againſt him, nor fault in him *concerning the kingdom*, till they fell upon the device of moving the king to make

a decree about worſhip, that ſhould interfere with Daniel's obedience to his God; yet when that was done, he would not pay ſo much regard to it as to ſhut his windows. Dan. 6. 4—11. And when the Son of God, who is the great Law-giver and King of his church, came and blotted out the hand-writing of the typical ordinances, and eſtabliſhed a better covenant, or conſtitution of his church, upon better promiſes, we are aſſured that he was *faithful in all his houſe, and counted worthy of more glory than Moſes.* What vacancy has he then left for faliable men to ſupply, by making new laws to regulate and ſupport his worſhip? eſpecially if we conſider,

2. That as the putting any men into civil office is of men, of the people of the world; ſo officers have truly no more authority than the people give them: And how came the people of the world by any eccleſiaſtical power? They arm the magiſtrate with the *ſword*, that he may be a miniſter of God *to them for good*, and might execute wrath upon *evil doers*; and for this cauſe they pay them *tribute*: upon which the apoſtle proceeds to name thoſe divine commandments which are comprehended in love to our neighbour, and which work *no ill to him.* Surely the inſpired writer had not forgotten the firſt and great command of love to God; but as this chapter treats the moſt fully of the nature and end of civil government of any one in the new-teſtament, does it not clearly ſhew that the crimes which fall within the magiſtrates juriſdiction to puniſh, are only ſuch as work ill to our

our neighbour ? Rom. 13. 1—10. While church government reſpects our behaviour toward God as well as man.

3. All acts of executive power in the civil ſtate, are to be performed in the name of the king or ſtate they belong to ; while all our religious acts are to be done in the *name of the Lord Jeſus* ; and ſo are to be performed *heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men.* And it is but *lip ſervice*, and *vain worſhip*, if our *fear toward him is taught by the precepts of men.* Col. 3. 17, 23. Iſa. 29. 13. Mat. 15. 9. It is often pleaded, that magiſtrates ought to do their duty in religious as well as civil affairs. That is readily granted ; but what is their duty therein ? Surely it is to *bow to the name of Jeſus*, and to ſerve him with holy reverence ; and if they do the contrary they may expect to *periſh from the way.* Phil. 2. 10. Pſa. 2. 10—12. But where is the officer that will dare to come in the name of the Lord to demand, and forcibly to take, a tax which was impoſed by the civil ſtate ! And can any man in the light of truth, maintain his character as a miniſter of Chriſt, if he is not contented with all that Chriſt's name and influence will procure for him, but will have recourſe to the *kings of the earth*, to force money from the people to ſupport them under the name of an embaſſador of the *God of heaven* ! Does not ſuch conduct look more like the way of thoſe who made *merchandize of ſlaves and ſouls of men*, than it does like the *ſervants* who were content to be *as their Maſter*, who ſaid, *He that heareth you*

heareth

heareth me; and he that deſpiſeth you deſpiſeth me? Rev. 18. 9, 13. Luke 10. 3—16.

4. In all civil governments ſome are appointed to judge for others, and have power to compel others to ſubmit to their judgment: but our Lord has moſt plainly forbidden us, either to aſſume or ſubmit to any ſuch thing in religion. Mat. 23. 1—9. Luke 22. 25—27. He declares, that the *cauſe* of his coming into the world, was to bear *witneſs unto the truth*; and ſays he, *Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.* This is the nature of his *Kingdom*, which he ſays, *Is not of this world*: and gives that as the reaſon why his ſervants ſhould not *fight*, or defend him with the *ſword.* John. 18. 36, 37. And it appears to us that the true difference and exact limits between eccleſiaſtical and civil government is this, That the church is armed with *light and truth,* to pull down the ſtrong holds of iniquity, and to gain ſouls to Chriſt, and into his church, to be governed by his rules therein; and again to exclude ſuch from their communion, who will not be ſo governed; while the ſtate is armed with the *ſword* to guard the peace, and the civil rights of all perſons and ſocieties, and to puniſh thoſe who violate the ſame. And where theſe two kinds of government, and the weapons which belong to them, are well diſtinguiſhed, and improved according to the true nature and end of their inſtitution, the effects are happy, and they do not at all interfere with each other: but where they have been confounded together, no tongue nor pen can fully deſcribe the miſchiefs that have enſued;

of

of which the Holy Ghoſt gave early and plain warnings. He gave notice to the church, that the main of thoſe antichriſtian confuſions and abominations, would be drawn by philoſophy and deceit, from the *hand-writing of ordinances* that Chriſt has *blotted out*. And to avoid the ſame, directs the ſaints to walk in Chriſt Jeſus *as they received him*, rooted and built up *in him*, and ſtabliſhed in the faith *as they have been taught*; viewing that they are *complete in him, which is the* HEAD *over* ALL PRINCIPALITY *and* POWER. Therefore he charges them not to be beguiled into a *voluntary humility*, by ſuch *fleſhly minds* as do not hold this *Head*, but would ſubject them to ordinances after the doctrines and commandments of men. Col. 2.

Now 'tis well known that this glorious Head made no uſe of ſecular force in the firſt ſitting up of the goſpel church, when it might ſeem to be pecularly needful if ever; and it is alſo very evident, that ever ſince men came into the way of uſing force in ſuch affairs, their main arguments to ſupport it have been drawn from the old Jewiſh conſtitution and ordinances. And what work has it made about the head as well as members of the church?

Firſt they moved Conſtantine, a ſecular prince, to draw his ſword againſt heretics; but as all earthly ſtates are changeable, the ſame ſword that Conſtantine drew againſt heretics, Julion turned againſt the orthodox. However, as the high prieſt's ſentence in the Jewiſh ſtate, divided matters both for prince and people, the ſame deceitful

ceitful piloſophy that had gone ſo far, never left plotting till they had ſet up an eccleſiaſtical head over kingdoms as well as churches, who with Peter's keys was to open and ſhut, bind and looſe, both in ſpiritual and temporal affairs. But after many generations had groaned under this helliſh tyranny, a time came when England renounced that head, and ſet up the king as their head in eccleſiaſtical as well as civil concernments; and though the free uſe of the ſcriptures which was then introduced, by a divine bleſſing, produced a great reformation, yet ſtill the *high places* were not taken away, & the *lord biſhops* made ſuch work in them, as drove our fathers from thence into America. The firſt colony that came to this part of it carried the reformation ſo far, as not to make uſe of the civil power to ſave the people to ſupport religious miniſters (for which they have had many a laſh from the tongues & pens of thoſe who were fond of that way) but the ſecond colony, who had not taken up the croſs ſo as to ſeparate from the national church before they came away, now determined to pick out all that they thought was of univerſal and moral equity in Moſes's laws, and ſo to frame a chriſtian common wealth here. † And as the Jews were ordered not to ſet up any rulers over them who were not their *brethren*; ſo this colony reſolved to have no rulers nor voters for rulers, but brethren in their churches. And as the Jews were required to inflict corporal puniſhments, even unto death, upon non-conformers to their worſhip, this common-wealth did the like to ſuch as refuſed to conform to their way; and they ſtrove

† Maſſachuſetts hiſtory, vol. 3. p. 161.

ſtrove very hard to have the church govern the world, till they loſt their charter; ſince which they have yielded to have the world govern the church, as we ſhall proceed to ſhew.

SECTION II.

A brief view of how civil and eccleſiaſtical affairs are blended together among us, to the depriving of many of God's people of that liberty of conſcience which he has given them.

We are not inſenſible than an open appearance againſt any part of the conduct of men in power, is commonly attended with difficulty and danger; and could we have found any way wherein with clearneſs we could have avoided the preſent attempt, we would gladly have taken it. But our bleſſed Lord & only Redeemer, has commanded us, to *ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith he has made us free*; and things appear ſo to us at preſent that we cannot ſee how we can fully obey this command, without refuſing any active compliance with ſome laws about religious affairs that are laid upon us. And as thoſe who are intereſted againſt us, often accuſe us of complaining unreaſonably, we are brought under a neceſſity of laying open particular facts which otherwiſe we would gladly have concealed: and all muſt be ſenſible that there is a vaſt difference between expoſing the faults, either of individuals or communities, when the cauſe of truth and equity would ſuffer without it, and the doing of it without any ſuch occaſion. We view it to be our incumbent duty, to render unto

to Cæsar the things that are his, but that it is of as much importance not to render unto him any thing that belongs only to God, who is to be obeyed rather than man. And as it is evident to us, that God always claimed it as his sole prerogative to determine by his own laws, what his worship shall be, who shall minister in it, and how they shall be supported; so it is evident that their prerogative has been, and still is, encroached upon in our land. For,

1. Our legislature claim a power to compel every town and parish within their jurisdiction, to set up and maintain a pedobaptist worship among them; although it is well known, that infant baptism is never express'd in the Bible, only is upheld by men's reasonings, that are chiefly drawn from Abraham's covenant which the Holy Ghost calls, *The covenant of circumcision*, Acts 7. 8. And as circumcision was one of the handwriting of ordinances which Christ has *blotted out*, where did any state ever get any right to compel their subjects to set up a worship upon that covenant?

2. Our ascended Lord gives *gifts unto men* in a sovereign way as seems good unto him, and he requires *Every man, as he has received the gift, even so to minister the same*; and he reproved his apostles when they forbid one who was improving his gift, because he followed not them. 1 Pet. 4. 10, 11. Luk. 9. 49. But the Massachusetts legislature, while they claim a power to compel each parish to settle a minister, have also determined that he must be one, who

 has

has either an accademical degree, or a teſtimonial in his favour from a majority of the miniſters in the county where the pariſh lies. So that let Chriſt give a man ever ſo great gifts, yet hereby theſe miniſters derive a noble power from the ſtate, to forbid the improvement of the ſame, if he follows not their ſchemes. ¶ And if the apoſtles aſſumed too much in this reſpect to themſelves, even when their Lord was with them, can it be any breach of charity to conclude that miniſters are not out of danger of doing the like now? eſpecially if we conſider how intereſt operates in the affair! For,

3. Though the Lord hath *ordained that they which preach the goſpel ſhall live of the goſpel*; or by the free *communications to them*, which his goſpel will produce. 1 Cor. 9. 13, 14. Gal. 6. 6. 7. Yet the miniſters of our land have choſen to *live by the law*; and as a reaſon therefor, one of their moſt noted writers, inſtead of producing any truth of God, recites the tradition of a man, who ſaid, "Miniſters of the goſpel would have "a poor time of it, if they muſt rely on a *free* "*contribution of the people* for their maintenance." And he ſays, "The laws of the pro-

"vince

¶ It has been the cuſtom of miniſter's who are ſettled in this way, for theſe thirty years paſt, to apply the *gainſaying of Core* to thoſe who have diſſented from them; as if they were as certainly in the right way, as Moſes and Aaron were. And 16 miniſters in the county of Windham, in a public letter to their people in 1744, ſtile theirs, "The inſtituted "churches;" and thoſe who had withdrawn from them, "uninſtituted worſhip;" and then they go on to aſſert, that Deut. 13, prove that the people, "May not go af-"ter it, any more than—after a falſe god." p. 42. 43.

" vince having had the royal approbation to ra-
" tify them, they are the king's laws. By theſe
" laws it is enacted, that there ſhall be a public
" worſhip of God in every plantation; that the
" perſon elected by the majority of the inhabi-
" tants to be ſo, ſhall be looked upon as the mi-
" niſter of the place; that the ſalary for him,
" which they ſhall agree upon, ſhall be levied
" by a rate upon all the inhabitants. In conſe-
" quence of this, the miniſter *thus* choſen by
" the people, is (not only Chriſt's but alſo) in
" reality, the *king's miniſter*; and the ſalary raiſ-
" ed for him, is raiſed in the *king's name*, and is
" the king's allowance unto him." †

Now who can hear Chriſt declare, that his kingdom is, NOT OF THIS WORLD, and yet believe that this blending of church and ſtate together can be pleaſing to him? For though their laws call them " orthodox miniſters," yet the grand teſt of their orthodoxy, is the major vote of the people, be they ſaints or ſinners, believers or unbelievers. This appears plain in the foregoing quotation; and another of their learned writers lately ſays, " It is the congregation in
" it's parocal congregational capacity, that the
" *law* conſiders; and this as ſuch does not enough
" partake of an eccleſiaſtical nature to be ſub-
" ject to eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction. ‡

Hence their miniſters and churches muſt become ſubject to the court, and to the majority of

† Dr. Cotton Mather's *Ratio Diſciplinæ*; or faithful account of the diſcipline profeſſed and practiſed in the churches of New-England, 1726. p. 20.

‡ Dr. Stiles on the chriſtian union. p. 85.

of the pariſh in order to have their ſalary raiſed in the *king's name*: But how are either of them in the mean time ſubject to the authority of Chriſt in his church? How can any man reconcile ſuch proceedings to the following commands of our Maſter which is in heaven? Mat. 23. 9, 10. What matter of grief and lamentation is it, that men otherwiſe ſo knowing and juſtly eſteemed, ſhould by the traditions of men be carried into ſuch a *crooked* way as this is! for though there is a ſhew of equity in allowing every ſociety to chooſe it's own miniſter; yet let them be ever ſo unanimous for one who is of a different *mode* from the court, their choice is not allowed. Indeed as to doctrine miniſters who preach differently, yea directly contrary to each other, about Chriſt and his ſalvation, yet are ſupported by theſe laws which at the ſame time limit the people to one circumſtantial mode.

It is true the learned author juſt now quoted ſays, "If the moſt of the inhabitants in a planta-" tion are epiſcopalians, they will have a miniſter " of their own perſuaſion; and the *diſſenters*, in " the place, if there be any, muſt pay their pro-" portion of the tax for the ſupport of this *legal* " *miniſter*." § But then his next words ſhew that they

§ According to this rule, whoever gets the upper hand may tax the reſt to their worſhip; but when will men learn the madneſs of ſuch conduct!

Sir Henry Vane, who was governor of the Maſſachuſetts in 1636, but whom governor Winthrop obliged the next year to leave the colony, he at a time when he had great influence in the Britiſh parliament wrote to governor Winthrop thus: "The exerciſe and troubles which God is " pleaſed

they did not intend ever to have ſuch a caſe here; for he ſays, "In a few of the towns, a few of "the people, in hope of being releaſed from "the tax for the legal miniſter, ſometimes pro-"feſs themſelves epiſcopalians. But when "they plead this for their exemption, their "neighbours tell them, *They know in their con-"ſcience they do not as they would be done unto.* "And if a governor go by his arbitrary power, "to ſuperſede the execution of the law, and re-"quire the juſtices and conſtables to leave the "epiſcopalians out of the tax, they wonder "he is not aware, that he is all this while, for-"bidding that the king ſhould have his dues "paid unto him; and forbidding the king's "miniſters to receive what the king has given "him." ‡

How eſſentially and how greatly does this conſtitution differ, and from the inſtitutions eſtabliſhed in God's word, both in their nature and effects?

1. In

"pleaſed to lay upon theſe kingdoms and the inhabitants "in them, teaches us patience and forbearance one with a-"other in ſome meaſure, though there be difference in our "opinions, which makes me hope that, from the experi-"ence here, it may alſo be derived to yourſelves, leaſt while "the congregational way amongſt you is in freedom, and is "*backed with power*, it teaches it's oppugners here to extir-"pate it and root it out, from its OWN PRINCIPLES and "PRACTICE.

"Sir, I am your affectionate friend, and ſervant in "Chriſt,

"June 10. 1645. H. Vane."

Maſſachuſets hiſtroy, vol. 3. p. 137.

‡ *Ratio Diſciplinæ*, p. 20, 21.

1. In their *nature.* Here you find that every religious miniſter in that conſtitution, is called the king's miniſter, becauſe he is ſettled by direction of the king's laws, and the tax for ſuch a miniſter's ſupport is raiſed in the king's name, and is called the king's dues: whereas no man in the Jewiſh church might approach to miniſter at the holy altar, but ſuch as were *called of God, as was Aaron:* and the means of their ſupport, were ſuch things as God required his people to *offer and conſecrate to Him*; and when they withheld the ſame, he ſays, *ye have robbed* ME, *even this whole nation*; and it is repreſented as his peculiar work to reward obedience, and to puniſh diſobedience in ſuch affairs. * It is evident from ſacred record, that good men in every ſtation, uſed their influence by word and example to ſtir up their fellow ſervants to do their duty toward God in theſe reſpects; and good rulers, in conjunction with church-officers, took care to have what was offered to him ſecured and diſtributed according to God's commandments. ¶ But what is there in all this that can give the leaſt countenance to the late method, of mens making laws to determine who ſhall be Chriſt's miniſters, and to raiſe money for them in their *own name*! Chriſt ſaid to the Jews, *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another ſhall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honor*

* Exod. 23, 15, 16. Deut. 16. 16, 17. and chap. 26. Mal. 3. 7—12. Hag. 1. 6—11. and 2. 17—19. Luke 12. 21.

¶ 1 Chron. 29. 2 Chron. 31. Nehem. 13. 10—13.

honor one of another, and ſeek not the honor that cometh from GOD ONLY ? John 5. 43, 44.

Even a heathen monarch, when he was moved to make a decree in favour of God's miniſter's and worſhip at Jeruſalem, it was to reſtrain their enemies from injuring or interrupting of them, and to order that a portion of the *king's goods* ſhould be *given unto the elders of the Jews* for the building of *the houſe of God*, and for the *burnt-offerings of the God of heaven*. Ezra. 6. 6—9. Nothing appears of his levying any new tax for worſhip, only that he gave the articles there ſpecified out of his *own goods*; yet ſome profeſſed chriſtians have impoſed new taxes upon people on purpoſe to compel them to ſupport their way of worſhip, and have blended it with other rates, and then called it all a civil tax. But as the act itſelf is deceitful ſo 'tis likely that the worſhip ſupported by ſuch means is hypocriſy. For,

2. The *effects* of the conſtitution of our country are ſuch, that as it makes the majority of the people the teſt of orthodoxy, ſo it emboldens them to uſurp God's judgment ſeat, and (according to Dr. Mather's own account, which we have often ſeen verified) they daringly give out their ſentence, That for a *few* to profeſs a perſuaſion different from the *majority*, it muſt be from bad motives; and that, *they know in their conſcience* that they do not act by the univerſal law of equity, if they plead to be exempted from paying the *money* which the *majority* demand of them! And though in our CHAR-

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TER the king grants to all proteſtants *equal liberty of conſcience*: yet for above thirty years after it was received, the congregationaliſts made no laws to favour the conſciences of any men, in this affair of taxes, but their own ſect; and it is here called arbitrary power, and even a forbidding that the king ſhould have his dues, if a governor ſhewed ſo much regard to the Charter, as to oppoſe their extorting money from people of the king's denomination, for their congregational miniſters. And perhaps the learned author now referred to, never delivered a plainer truth, than when he ſaid, "The re-"forming churches flying from Rome, carried "ſome of them more, ſome of them leſs, all of "them ſomething of Rome with them, eſpeci-"ally in that ſpirit of *impoſition* and *perſecution* "which too much cleaved to them."

Theſe evils cleaved ſo cloſe to the firſt fathers of the Maſſachuſetts, as to move them to impriſon, whip and baniſh men, only for denying infant baptiſm, and refuſing to join in worſhip that was ſupported by violent methods: yet they were ſo much blinded as to declare, That there was this *vaſt difference* between theſe proceedings and the coercive meaſures which were taken againſt themſelves in England, viz. We compel men to "God's inſtitutions;" they in England compelled to "mens inventions." And they aſſerted that the baptiſts were guilty of "manifeſt conteſtations againſt the order and "government of *our* churches, eſtabliſhed (we "know) by God's law." † Though they profeſſed

† Maſſachuſetts hiſtory, vol. 3. p. 404, 406.

feſſed at the ſame time that, " It is not lawful " to cenſure any, no not for error in fundemen- " tal points of doctrine or worſhip, till the con- " ſcience of the offender, be firſt convinced (out " of the word of God) of the dangerous error " of his way, and then if he ſtill perſiſt, it is " not out of conſcience, but againſt *his conſci-* " *ence* (as the apoſtle ſaith, Tit. 3. 11.) and ſo he " is not perſecuted for cauſe of conſcience, b t " puniſhed for ſinning againſt *his conſcience.*" *
In reply to which Mr. Williams ſays, " The " truth is, the carnal ſword is commonly the " judge of the conviction or obſtinacy of all " ſuppoſed hereticks. Hence the faithful wit- " neſſes of Chriſt, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, " had not a word to ſay in the diſputations at Ox- " ford: Hence the non-conformiſts were cried " out as obſtinate men, abundantly convinced " by the writings of Whitgift and others; and " ſo in the conference before king James at " Hampton court, &c." †

But ſays he, " Every lawful mgaiſtrate, whe- " ther ſucceeding or elected, is not only the mi- " niſter of God, but the miniſter or ſervant of " the people alſo (what people or nation ſoever " they be all the world over) and that miniſter " or magiſtrate goes beyond his commiſſion, " who intermeddles with that which cannot be

" given

* Mr. John Cotton's piece which he called, *The bloody tenet waſhed.* Printed 1647, p. 126. Mr. Roger Williams in his reply, obſerves that Tit. 3. 11, and other texts which ſpeak of church diſcipline, are *perverted* to ſupport ſtate-oppreſſion and violence. p. 131.

† Williams's reply to Cotton, 1652. p. 192.

" given him in the commiſſion from the people. ‡
" If the civil magiſtrate muſt keep the church
" pure, then all the people of the cities, nations
" and kingdoms of the *world* muſt do the ſame
" much more, for primarily and fundementally
" they are the civil magiſtrate. Now the world ſaith
" John *lieth in wickedneſs*, and conſequently ac-
" cording to it's diſpoſition endures not the
" light of Chriſt, nor his golden candleſtick the
" true church, nor eaſily chooſeth a true chriſ-
" tian to be her officer or magiſtrate. The
" practiſing civil force upon the conſciences of
" men, is ſo far from preſerving religion pure,
" that is a mighty bulwark or barricado, to keep
" out all true religion, yea and all godly ma-
" giſtrates for ever coming into the world." ‖

How weighty are theſe arguments againſt confounding church and ſtate together? yet this author's appearing againſt ſuch confuſion, was the chief cauſe for which he was baniſhed out of the Maſſachuſetts colony. And though few if any will now venture openly to juſtify thoſe proceedings, and many will exclaim againſt them at a high rate; yet a fair examination may plainly ſhew, that thoſe fathers had more appearance of a warrant for doing as they did, than their children now have, for the actings which we complain of. For thoſe fathers were perſuaded, that the judicial laws of Moſes which required Iſrael to puniſh blaſphemers, and apoſtates to idolatry with death, were of moral force, and binding upon all princes and ſtates; § eſpecially

‡ Page 96. ‖ Page 112.

§ Bloody tenet waſhed, p. 55.

ly on ſuch as theſe plantations were. ¶ And how much more countenance did this give for the uſe of force to make men *conform* to what they believed to be the right way, than men can now have for compelling any to *ſupport* a way which at the ſame time they are allowed to diſſent from? For the Jews alſo were required to pull down houſes, and to have perſons away out of their camps or cities, if the prieſts pronounced them unclean; and they were not permitted to ſet up any king over them who was not a *brother* in their church. Did not theſe things afford arguments much more plauſible, for their attempt to compel the world to ſubmit to the church, than any can have for the modern way, of trying to ſubject the church in her religious affairs to rulers, and the major vote of inhabitants, a great part of whom are not brethren in any church at all! Though the ſtate of Iſrael was obliged thus to inflict death or baniſhment upon non-conformers to their worſhip, yet we have not been able to find, that they were ever allowed to uſe any *force* to collect the prieſts or prophets maintenance. So far from it, that thoſe who made any ſuch attempts were *ſons of Beliel*, and perſons that *abhorred judgment, and perverted* ALL EQUITY. 1 Sam. 2. 12—16. Mic. 3. 5, 9.

Many try to vindicate their way by that promiſe, that kings ſhall become nurſing fathers, and queens nurſing mothers to God's people. But as the character carries in it's very nature, an *impartial care and tenderneſs for all their children*;

¶ Maſſachuſetts hiſtory, vol. 3. p. 161.

ren; we appeal to every conſcience, whether it does not condemn the way of ſetting up one *party* to the injury of another. Our Lord tells us plainly, that *few* find the narrow way, while *many* go in the *broad way*; yet the ſcheme we complain of, has given the *many* ſuch power over the *few*, that if the few are fully convinced that the teacher ſet up by the many, is one that *cauſeth* people to *err*, and is ſo far from bringing the pure *goſpel doctrine*, that they ſhould break the divine command, and become *partakers of his evil deeds*; if they did not *ceaſe to hear him*, or to receive him *into their houſes* as a goſpel miniſter; ‡ yet only for refuſing to put into ſuch a miniſter's mouth, the many are *prepared* with ſuch inſtruments of *war againſt them*, as to ſeize their goods, or caſt their bodies into priſon, where they may ſtarve and die, for all what that conſtitution has provided for them. In caſes of common debts the law has provided ſeveral ways of relief, as it has not in the caſe before us; for here the aſſeſſors plead, that they are *obliged* to tax all according to law, and the collector has the ſame plea for gathering of it, and the miniſter ſays, I agreed with the ſociety for ſuch a ſum, and it is not my buſineſs to releaſe any. So that we have had inſtances of ſerious chriſtians, who muſt have died in priſon for miniſters rates, if chriſtianity and humanity had not moved people to provide them that relief, which neither thoſe miniſters nor the law that upholds them have done.

Another

‡ Prov. 19. 27. 2 John 10. 11.

Another argument which theſe miniſters often mention, is the apoſtolic direction to us, to pray for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all *godlineſs* and *honeſty*. But do they pray and act according to that direction? One while they cry up the great advantages of having religion eſtabliſhed by law; and ſome have cauſed near as loud a clamour about it as the *craftſmen* did at Epheſus; but when it comes to be calmly repreſented, that, Religion is a *voluntary obedience unto God*, which therefore *force* cannot promote; how ſoon do they ſhift the ſcene, and tell us, that *religious liberty* is fully allowed to us, only the ſtate have in their wiſdom thought fit to tax all the inhabitants, to ſupport an order of men for the good of *civil ſociety*. A little while ago it was for religion, and many have declared, that without it we ſhould ſoon have no religion left among us: but now tis to maintain civility. Though by the way, it is well known, that no men in the land, have done more to promote uncivil treatment of diſſenters from themſelves, than ſome of theſe pretended miniſters of civility have done. In 1644 the court at Boſton paſſed an act to puniſh men with baniſhment, if they oppoſed infant baptiſm, or departed from any of their congregations when it was going to be adminiſtered.* And after they had acted upon this law, one of their chief magiſtrates obſerved, that ſuch methods tended to make hypocrites. To which a noted miniſter replied, That if it did ſo, yet ſuch were better than profane perſons, becauſe ſaid he, "Hypocrites give God part of his due, the out-

"ward

* Mr. Clark's narrative, P. 35.

" ward man, but the profane perſon giveth God " neither outward nor inward man."† By which it ſeems that in that day, they were zealous to have the outward man if no more *given to God*; but now that conduct is condemned as perſecution, by their children, who profeſs to allow us full liberty of conſcience, becauſe they do not hinder our giving our inward man to God, only claim a power to ſeize our outward man to get money for themſelves. And though many of us have expended ten or twenty times as much, in ſetting up and ſupporting that worſhip which we believe to be right, as it would have coſt us to have continued in the faſhionable way, yet we are often accuſed of being coveteous, for diſſenting from that way, and refuſing to pay more money out of our little incomes, to uphold men from whom we receive no benefit, but rather abuſe. How far is this from leading a *peaceable life*, either of *godlineſs* or *honeſty!*

SECTION III.

A brief account of what the baptiſts have ſuffered under this conſtitution, and of their reaſons for refuſing any active compliance with it.

Many are ready to ſay, the baptiſts are exempted from miniſterial taxes, therefore why do they complain? Anſwer, We would be far from forgetting or undervaluing of our privileges: but are willing thankfully to acknowledge, that our honored rulers do protect our

† Maſſachuſetts hiſtory, vol. 3. p. 405.

our ſocieties, ſo as not to allow them to be interrupted in their worſhip; and as the taking cognizance of marriage belongs to them, we take it as a favour that they grant our miniſters power to adminiſter it, ſo that we may have marriage ſolemnized among ourſelves. Many other liberties we alſo enjoy under the government that is ſet over us, for which we deſire to be thankful, both to the Author, and to the inſtruments of them. Yet if our opponents could once put themſelves into our place, we doubt not but they would think it was high time, to ſeek for more full liberty than we have hitherto enjoyed, a ſhort view of but a little part of what we have met with, my be ſufficient to evince this.

Our charter, as before obſerved, gives us equal religious liberty with other chriſtians: yet the pedobaptiſts being the greateſt party, they ſoon made a perpetual law to ſupport their own way, but did nothing of that nature to exempt our denomination from it, for 36 years; and ſince that time, what they have done in that reſpect has only been by temporary acts, which have been ſo often changed, that many times their own officers have hardly known what the law was, that was in force; and as an exact conformity to the letter of their laws is much inſiſted upon in their executive courts, while thoſe acts have never been enforced with penalties upon their own people, they have often broken them, and we have had but little chance to get them puniſhed for ſo doing. For in all their acts till the laſt, they have impoſed a name upon us, that ſignifies *re-baptizers*, which we cannot underſtandingly

ſtandingly own. In many acts the words, "belonging thereto," were inſerted ſo ambigouſly, as to leave it diſputable, whether a being church members, or only a belonging to the congregation or worſhipping aſſembly were intended; and in the caſe of Haverhill, where their certificate was otherways compleat, and the caſe had been determined in the baptiſts favor, in that which both parties had agreed ſhould be the final trial; yet another hearing was obtained, in which the want of them ambiguous words in the certificate, was made the main plea by which an action was turned againſt us, of near three hundred dollars. All their latter acts have required a liſt or liſts of our ſocieties, to be given in annually by a certain day, ſigned by three principal members, and the miniſter if there be any; and becauſe one of our churches of above 50 members (and which is now a church in good credit) happened one year to have ſuch a difficulty with their miniſter, as prevented the giving in of ſaid liſt, they were taxed to pedobaptiſt miniſters; and tho' ſome of the ſociety were adviſed to apply to their county court for relief, yet inſtead of obtaining any, the court took away 20 dollars more from them. Another church gave in their liſt by the direction of a noted lawyer, yet they were all taxed to the pedobaptiſt worſhip, and one of the principal members of the baptiſt church, which the law directed to ſign the liſt, was ſtrained upon; and both the inferior and ſuperior court turned the caſe againſt him, becauſe he was a *party concerned.*

Here note, the inhabitants of our mother-country are not more of a party concerned, in

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impoſing taxes upon us without our conſent, than they have been in this land who have made and executed laws, to tax *us* to uphold *their worſhip*. This *party influence* has appeared in a much larger number of inſtances than we are willing to trouble the public with at this time; but one inſtance more will ſet our caſe in ſuch a ſtriking light, that we muſt aſk for a very ſerious attention to it; we mean that of Aſhfield, formerly called Hunts-town in the county of Hampſhire. One of the conditions on which that plantation was granted by our legiſlature, was their ſettling a learned orthodox miniſter, and building a meeting-houſe. Now in the year 1761, full two thirds of the inhabitants called and ſettled a miniſter, who they believed was taught of God and truly orthodox. But not being of the ſame mode with the court (for they were baptiſts) other people were prompted on, before this ſociety could get up a meeting-houſe, to ſettle another miniſter, and to tax the firſt miniſter with all his people to ſupport their way. This burden the baptiſts bore for a number of years, till in 1768, they preſented a petition to our general court for relief; who ordered that they ſhould ſerve the town and proprietors of Aſhfield with a copy of the petition, that they might ſhew cauſe, if any they had, at the next ſeſſion of the court why it ſhould not be granted, and that a further collection of taxes from the petitioners ſhould be ſuſpended in the mean time. Yet in the ſame ſeſſion of the court, a law was made which cut the baptiſts in that place, off from any exemption from miniſterial taxes at all. In conſequence of which ſeveral hundred acres

of their lands were ſold at public auction, for but a ſmall part of their real value; of which ten acres belonged to the baptiſt miniſter. And after five or ſix journies of above an hundred miles to ſeek relief, and long waiting without ſucceſs, their meſſenger was at laſt plainly told, by a number of our repreſentatives, "That they "had a right to make that law, and to keep the "baptiſts under it as long as they ſaw fit." Hereupon notice was given in ſome Boſton papers, of a deſign among our churches of joining to ſeek redreſs from another quarter.

Accordingly at an aſſociation or general meeting of our churches at Bellingham, in September, 1770, theſe things were conſidered, and it was unanimouſly agreed upon to apply to his Majeſty for help, if it could not ſpeedily be obtained here; and a committee and agents were choſen for that purpoſe. When news hereof was ſpread, our committee were urged by leading men both in church and ſtate, to apply again to our general court; which therefore they did in October following. In the mean time a piece dated from Cambridge, where the court was then ſitting, was publiſhed in all the Boſton news-papers, wherein it was repreſented that, "All poſſible "care had been taken to prevent our ſuffering "the *leaſt diſadvantage* from our religious ſen-"timents;" and we were challenged to ſhew the contrary if we could.

Upon this the pious and learned Mr. John Davis, who from Pennſylvania had not long before been ordained paſtor of the ſecond bap-

tiſt

tiſt church in Boſton, and who was clerk of our committee, called them together to conſider of this matter. And though they were far from deſiring to enter into a news-paper controverſy, yet they adviſed him to make ſome reply to that challenge: He did ſo; and on Dec. 27, publiſhed a brief and plain view of the caſe of Aſhfield: but inſtead of any fair and manly treatment upon it, he in the Evening-Poſt of Jan. 7, 1771, was not only inſulted with the names of, "A little upſtart gentleman; enthuſiaſtical big-"got; and, this ſtripling high-ſtiar;" but had it alſo inſinuated that he was employed "by the "*enemies* of America to *defame* and *blacken* the "colonies, and this town in particular." And they had the impudence to pretend to the world, that all this was wrote by a CATHOLIC BAPTIST. And they inflamed the populace ſo againſt Mr. Davis, that his moſt judicious friends were afraid of his being mobbed. But can it be in the power of others to *blacken* any people ſo much, as by this treatment of a worthy ſtranger (now at reſt) they have blackened themſelves! Inſtead of honeſtly *coming to the light* (which our Lord gives as the criterion to know him *that doth truth*, John 3. 21.) how do they hover in the works of darkneſs.

The firſt article in our committee's petition to the legiſlature, being for Aſhfield, they were ordered to notify the proprietors thereof: They did ſo; and in the ſpring ſeſſion of the aſſembly, they came with a long addreſs againſt us, in which they begin, with ſaying more generally of the baptiſts in that part of the province, "The "proprietors

" proprietors conceive it to be a duty they owe " to God and their country, not to be diſpenſed " with, to lay open the characters, and real " *ſprings of action* of ſome of theſe people." Then they go on to ſay, " The *rule* the petiti- " oners have ſet up, and on which alone they " ſeem to ground their claim of exemption, is " *falſly applied*, and therefore all arguments bot- " tomed on it muſt be inconcluſive. *Natural* " *rights*, ¶ as the reſpondents humbly conceive, " are in this province *wholly* ſuperceded in this " caſe by *civil obligation*, and in matters of taxa- " tion individuals cannot with the leaſt propriety " plead them." Having thus denied us any claim from *natural rights*, they reſume what they call an indiſpenſible duty, viz. an attempt to lay before our honored legiſlature the baptiſts' cha- racter, and the *ſprings* of their actions; and after a number of mean reflections without any proof at all, they ſum up the ſprings of the actions of moſt of them to be " Pride, vanity, prejudice, " impurity and uncharitableneſs." Very dread- ful indeed if it could be proved! but that is re- ferred to a hereafter, and they ſay, " At preſent " we ſhall content ourſelves with aſſuring your " excellency and honors, that the foregoing ac- " count is not exaggerated." From

¶ Here note, the plea of our petition was for what we are " Intitled to as men, as chriſtians, and ſubjects of a free " government.—Some of the laws of this province, we " think deprive us of a CHARTER privilege." Theſe are what we grounded all our claims upon; yet they inſinuate that our claim was in this affair to be, " reſtored to a ſtate " of nature;" like thoſe who are under no civil govern- ment at all. Notwithſtanding we expreſly ſpeak of our being ſubjects of a free government, and pleaded charter- privileges. Remember what is ſaid of thoſe who *Turn aſide to their crooked ways!*

From this they proceed to obſerve, that as it belongs to rulers to " protect and ſupport all " regular religious ſocieties of proteſtants," ſo they ſay, " Whenever any religion or profeſſion " wears an *ill aſpect to the ſtate*, it is become a " proper object of attention to the legiſlature. " —And this is the religion of the people whom " we have been deſcribing." How much does this reſemble the language of him who ſaid, *It is not for the king's profit to ſuffer them !** or theirs who cried, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend !* †

After thus repreſenting that the religion of the baptiſts that way, wears an *ill aſpect to the ſtate*, they go on to ſpeak of the conditions upon which Aſhfield was granted ; and then try to prove that Mr. Ebenezer Smith, paſtor of the baptiſt church there, " is not a miniſter in " law," becauſe he has neither an accademical degree, nor a teſtimonial in his favor from the majority of the miniſters of that county. And to give an idea of the ſmallneſs of his ability for teaching, they ſay, " Taking occaſion in one " of his diſcourſes upon that paſſage of ſcrip- " ture, in which mention is made of the thick " boſſes of God's buckler ; inſtead of *buckler*, " he gave his hearers the word *butler*. Being in- " terrogated by one occaſionally preſent as to " his meaning, he explained himſelf ſo as clearly " ſhewed, he meant to connect the other part of " the ſentence with the word butler, in the " commonly received ſenſe of the word."

The cleareſt light we have gained in the matter is this. After Mr. Smith had been preach- ing

* Eſter 3. 8. † John 19. 12.

ing in a neighbouring town some years ago, a minister who was present asked him what a butler was? he readily replied, *Pharoah's cup-bearer*. After a little more talk, said minister † asserted, That Mr. Smith used the word butler instead of buckler in his sermon. He did not remember that he had; but if he did so, how injurious is the above representation? is it not the evil which we read of in Isa. 29. 20, 21? Having made this reflection upon Mr. Smith, they say, "He "has none of the qualifications of a minister ac- "cording to the laws of Christ, or of this pro- "vince, unless those of *simplicity* and *orthodoxy*." We wish his accusers were so well qualified. 2 Cor. 1. 12. and 4. 2.

In April, 1771, the address we have made a few remarks upon was referred to a committe of both houses of our general court, who reported that, "Your committe find, that in the sale of "those lands there was no unfairness, but every "thing was quite fair, quite neighbourly, and "*quite legal*."§ And as to our plea for exemption

† The minister who thus treated Mr. Smith is nearly related to a ruler who has had a principal hand in all their troubles at Ashfield, and likely they were confederates in forming this address against them. And it is generally believed that it was the same minister who published a piece against the baptists of Ashfield, in the Boston News-Letter of Feb. 7, 1771; to which Mr. Smith returned an Answer in the same paper of March 21, following; wherein, from public records and other ways, he detected said writer in a number of gross violations of truth.

§ Twenty acres of said land with a good orchard upon it, a man bid off in April, 1770, for 35 shillings, which he sued for the next August, and laid his damages at eight pounds;

tion from miniſterial taxes they ſay, "There is "an eſſential difference between perſons being "taxed where they are not repreſented, there-"fore againſt their wills, and being taxed when "repreſented." So they adviſed the court to diſmiſs our petition as unreaſonable; and though the honorable houſe of repreſentatives did not accept that advice, but voted to repeal the Aſhfield law; yet the council refuſed to concur with them therein; ſo that if his gracious Majeſty in council had not diſannuled ſaid law for us, our brethren of Aſhfield muſt, for ought that appeared to the contrary, have been entirely ſtripped of the inheritances, which they had purchaſed, and ſubdued at the peril of their lives, becauſe of the ſword of the wilderneſs.

It may be remembered that the pedobaptiſt proprietors of Aſhfield, repreſented that the baptiſts there were not worthy of the *protection* of our legiſlature. The following narrative may help to explain what they meant by it. The news of what our king had done for them, arrived and was publiſhed in Boſton the latter end of October, 1771, at which their oppreſſors diſcovered great uneaſineſs; and on the 8th of November came two officers with numerous attendants, to the houſe of Mr. Smith, father of the baptiſt miniſter in Aſhfield, (and very much of a father to that ſociety) with a warrant from the chief judge of that county, to ſeize

pounds; but upon trial the court found that the ſale was *Not legal*, and therefore turned the caſe againſt him. With what face then, ſaid Mr. Davis, could the writer of that report ſay as he does!

ſeize his perſon, and to ſearch his houſe and ſhop for bad money: and it was ſaid they had a like warrant for the miniſter, but he happened to be then ablent on a journey. His father was made a priſoner before he was out of his bed in the morning, and though he promiſed the uſe of his keys, and deſired that no lock might be broken, yet while he was at prayer with his family, for which he obtained leave of one officer, the other broke open his ſhop, and did conſiderable damage there; and after ſearching both that and his houſe as much as they pleaſed, they carried him before the aforeſaid judge and others; where it plainly appeared that the complaint was entered againſt Mr. Smith from a report, that he had put off a counterfeit dollar; which report was then proved to be a falſe one. Yet the old gentleman was not releaſed, but was kept a priſoner through a cold night, in circumſtances that greatly injured his health, and next day was bro't on further examination, when even his frequent retirement for ſecret devotion, which he had practiſed for above forty years, was catched hold of to raiſe a ſuſpicion of his being guilty: and he was bound over with two ſureties to the next ſuperior court in that county. Hereupon the following men who had been called as witneſſes againſt him, gave him their teſtimony in writing, declaring that they were ready to make oath to it, in the following terms, viz.

Aſhfield, Nov. 11, 1771.

"We the ſubſcribers, who have been ſummoned to prove an indictment againſt Chileab Smith, of his coining and putting off bad money, do teſtify and ſay, That we did not,

"nor

" nor cannot underſtandingly atteſt to one tittle
" of the indictment, nor of any circumſtance
" tending to prove the ſame. And we never
" ſaw nor heard any thing in him that gave the
" leaſt ground to miſtruſt, that he kept a ſhop
" of ſecrecy, or did any thing there that he was
" afraid ſhould be known ; and do believe the
" reports to the contrary are entirely falſe. As
" neither did we in our judgments hear any
" of the ſaid indictment in any meaſure proved
" by any of the reſt of the evidences ; as wit-
" neſs our hands, *Ebenezer Sprague,*
Nathaniel Harvey,
Jonathan Sprague,
Nathan Chapin,
Moſes Smith, 2d.
Chileab Smith, jun.
Nehemiah Sprague."

Alſo *Leonard Pike*, to whom the report was that Mr. Smith had put off a bad dollar, gave from under his hand that ſaid report had no truth in it. Theſe are eight of the ten witneſſes that were ſummoned againſt Mr. Smith ; & tho' much pains was taken to procure evidence againſt him at the ſuperior court, yet he was entirely acquitted ; and the law was open for him to come back for damages, for a *malicious proſecution* ; but they had contrived to have the complaint againſt him entered by a bankrupt, ſo that no recompence might be obtained by him. Are theſe the goodly fruits of having a particular mode of worſhip eſtabliſhed by law, and their miniſters ſupported by force !

Though we are often accuſed of complaining without reaſon, yet no longer ago than the 26th

of laſt January, three men of good credit, belonging to a numerous and regular baptiſt ſociety in Chelmsford, were ſeized for miniſterial rates (notwithſtanding they had given in a liſt according to law) and though one of them was above four ſcore years old, another very infirm in body, while the third had no man at home, able to take care of the out-door affairs of his numerous family, yet they, in that cold ſeaſon, were all carried priſoners to Concord goal.

Theſe accounts we have received from good authority, and have taken great pains to have them ſtated as exactly and truly as poſſible; and if any can point out the leaſt miſtake in what has been now related, we ſhall be glad to correct it. At the ſame time we are far from charging all the evils we complain of, upon the whole congregational denomination without diſtinction; for we believe there were many among them in various ſtations, who are ſorely grieved at theſe oppreſſions. We are willing alſo to make all the allowance that is reaſonable, for the influence of old cuſtoms, education and other prejudices, in thoſe who have injured their neighbours in theſe affairs; but is it not high time now to awake, and ſeek for a more thorough reformation! We agree with the committee of our honored legiſlature in ſaying, There is an eſſential difference between perſons being taxed *where they are repreſented*, and being taxed where they are not ſo; therefore the whole matter very much turns upon this point, viz. Whether our *civil* legiſlature are in truth our repreſentatives in *religious* affairs, or not? As God has always claimed it as his prerogative,

to

to appoint who ſhall be his miniſters, and how they ſhall be ſupported, ſo under the goſpel, the peoples communications to Chriſt's miniſters and members, are called *ſacrifices* with which *God is well-pleaſed*. Phil. 4. 18. Heb. 13. 16—18. And what government on earth ever had, or ever can have any power to make or execute any laws to appoint and enforce *ſacrifices to God!*

In civil ſtates the power of the whole collective body is veſted in a few hands, that they may with better advantage defend themſelves againſt injuries from abroad, and correct abuſes at home, for which end a few have a right to judge for the whole ſociety; but in religion each one has an equal right to judge for himſelf; for we muſt all *appear* before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, that *every one* may receive the things *done in his body*, according to that *he hath done* (not what any earthly repreſentative hath done for him) 2 Cor. 5. 10 And we freely confeſs that we can find no more warrant from divine truth, for any people on earth to conſtitute any men their repreſentatives, to make laws, to impoſe religious taxes, than they have to appoint Peter or the Virgin Mary to repreſent them before the throne above. We are therefore brought to a ſtop about paying ſo much regard to ſuch laws, as to give in annual certificates to the other denomination, as we have formerly done.

1. Becauſe the very nature of ſuch a practice implies an acknowledgment, that the civil power has a right to ſet one religious ſect up above another, elſe why need we give certificates

to

to them any more than they to us? It is a tacit allowance that they have a right to make laws about such things, which we believe in our consciences they have not. For,

2. By the foregoing address to our legislature, and their committees report thereon, it is evident, that they claim a right to tax us from *civil obligation*, as being the representatives of the people. But how came a civil community by any ecclesiastical power? how came the kingdoms of *this world* to have a right to govern in Christ's kingdom which is *not of this world!*

3. That constitution not only emboldens people to *judge the liberty of other mens consciences*, and has carried them so far as to tell our general assembly, that they conceived it to be a *duty they owed to God* and their country, not to be dispensed with, to lay before them the *springs* of their neighbours actions; ¶ but it also requires something of the same nature from us. Their laws require us annually to certify to them, what our belief is concerning the *conscience* of every person that assembles with us, as the condition of their being exempted from taxes to other's worship. And only because our brethren in Bellingham, left that clause about the *conscience* out of their certificates last year, a number of their society who live at Mendon were lately taxed, and suffered the spoiling of their goods to uphold pedobaptist worship.

4. The

¶ How are men deluded to think they *do God service*, when they violate his word! 1 Cor. 4. 5. Would not the same principle carry them to *kill* Christ's disciples under the same pretence? John 16. 2.

4. The ſcheme we oppoſe evidently tends to deſtroy the purity and life of religion; for the inſpired apoſtle aſſures us, that the church is *eſpouſed as a chaſte virgin to Chriſt*, and is obliged to be *ſubject to him in every thing*, as a true wife is to her huſband. Now the moſt chaſte domeſtic obedience, does not at all interfere with any lawful ſubjection to civil authority; but for a woman to admit the higheſt ruler in a nation into her huſband's place, would be *adultery* or *whoredom*; and how often are *mens inventions* about worſhip ſo called in the ſacred oracles? § And does it not greatly concern us all, earneſtly to ſearch out and put away ſuch evils, as we would deſire to eſcape the awful judgments that ſuch wickedneſs has brought on other nations! Eſpecially if we conſider that not only the purity, but alſo the very life and being of religion among us is concerned therein; for 'tis evident that Chriſt has given as plain laws to determine what the duty of people is to his miniſters, as he has the duty of miniſters to his people;

§ Pſalm 106. 39. We delight not in hard names, but every vice ought to be called by it's proper name; and the cuſtom in this adulterous age of calling thoſe, *natural children*, which God calls *children of whoredom*, has doubtleſs had a pernicious effect upon many to embolden them to go on in their filthy ways. God charged his ancient church with *playing the harlot*, becauſe ſhe ſaid, *I will go after my lovers, that gave me my bread and my water*;——*For ſhe did not know that* I GAVE HER CORN, &c. Hoſea 2. 5, 8. By which it appears, that to fix our dependence upon any other beſide the divine Being, and to purſue any method beſide his directions, to obtain the neceſſaries and comforts of life, is whoredom; and does not the chief ſin of the *mother of harlots* lie in her fixing this dependence upon the *kings of the earth*? Rev. 18. 3——13.

ple; and moſt certainly he is as able to enforce the one as the other. The common plea of our opponents is, that people will not do their duty if rulers do not enforce it; but does not the whole book of God clearly ſhew, that miniſters as often fail of doing their duty as the people do? And where is the care of rulers to puniſh miniſters for their unfaithfulneſs? They often talk about *equality* in theſe affairs, but where does it appear! As Chriſt is THE HEAD of all *principality* and *power*; ſo the *not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having* NOURISHMENT MINISTRED, *and* KNIT TOGETHER, *increaſeth with the increaſe* OF GOD, but bringing in an *earthly power* between Chriſt and his people, has been the grand ſource of anti-chriſtian abominations, and of ſettling men down in *a form of godlineſs*, while they *deny the power thereof*. Has not this earthly ſcheme prevailed ſo far in our land, as to cauſe many miniſters, inſtead of *taking heed to the miniſtry received from the Lord*; and inſtead of *watching for ſouls as thoſe who muſt give an account*, * rather to act as if they were not accountable to any higher power, than that of the *men* who ſupport them?—and on the other hand, how do many people behave as if they were more afraid of the collector's warrant, and of an earthly priſon, than of Him who ſends his miniſters to preach his goſpel, and ſays, *He that receiveth whomſoever I ſend, receiveth me*; but declares, That it ſhall be more tolerable in the day of judgment *for Sodom*, than for thoſe who *receive them not*? † Yea, as if they were more afraid of an earthly power than

* Col. 4. 17. Heb. 13. 17. † Joh. 13. 20. Luk. 10. 10-12

than of our great King and Judge, who can *this night* require the ſoul of him that layeth up *treaſure for himſelf, and is not rich towards God*; and will ſentence all either to heaven or hell, according as they have treated Him well or ill, in his miniſters and members. †

5. The cuſtom which they want us to countenance, is very hurtful to civil ſociety: for by the law of Chriſt *every man*, is not only allowed, but alſo required, to judge for himſelf, concerning the circumſtantials as well as the eſſentials of religion, and to act according to the *full perſuaſion of his own mind*; and he contracts guilt to his ſoul if he does the contrary. Rom. 14. 5, 23. What a temptation then does it lay for men to contract ſuch guilt, when temporal advantages are annexed to one perſuaſion, and diſadvantages laid upon another? i. e. in plain terms, how does it tend to hypocriſy and lying? than which, what can be worſe to human ſociety! Not only ſo, but coercive meaſures about religion alſo tend to provoke to emulation, wrath and contention, and who can deſcribe all the miſchiefs of this nature, that ſuch meaſures have produced in our land! But where each perſon, and each ſociety, are equally protected from being injured by others, all enjoying equal liberty, to attend and ſupport the worſhip which they believe is right, having no more ſtriving for maſtery or ſuperiority than *little children* (which we muſt all come to, or not *enter into the kingdom of heaven*) how happy are it's effects in civil ſociety? In the town of Boſton they enjoy ſomething of theſe bleſſings, and

† Luk. 12. 20, 21. Mat. 25. 31, &c.

and why may not the country have the ſame liberty? The miniſters who have had the chief hand in ſtirring up rulers to treat us as they have done, yet have ſometimes been forced to commend the liberty we plead for. When they wanted to get footing in the town of Providence, they wrote to governor Jencks and other rulers there, in the following words, viz.

" *Honorable gentlemen,*

" How pleaſing to almighty God and our " glorious Redeemer, and how conducible to the " the public *tranquility* and *ſafety*, an hearty u- " nion and good affection of all pious proteſtants " whatſoever particular denomination on ac- " count of ſome differences in opinion would be, " by the divine bleſſing, yourſelves as well as " we, are not inſenſible: and with what peace " and love ſocieties of different modes of " worſhip have generally entertained one ano- " ther in your government, we cannot think of " of it without admiration: and we ſuppoſe un- " der God, 'tis owing to the *choice liberty* grant- " ed to proteſtants of all perſwaſions in the royal " *charter* graciouſly given you; and to the wiſe " and prudent conduct of gentlemen that have " been improved as governors & juſtices in your " colony." And after more of this nature, they cloſe with ſaying, " We hope and pray, that an- " cient matters (that had acrimony unhappily in " them) may be buried in oblivion; and that " grace and peace and holineſs and glory may " dwell in every part of New-England; and that " the ſeveral provinces and colonies in it, may " love one another with a pure heart fervently.

" —We

" —We take leave to ſubſcribe ourſelves, your
" friends and ſervants,

Peter Thatcher,
Dated *Oct.* 27. 1721. *John Danforth,*
Joſeph Belcher, ‡
" Committee of the Aſſociation."

The town of Providence wrote them an anſwer the next February, in which they ſay, " We " take notice how you praiſe the love and peace " that diſſenters of all ranks entertain one another with in this government.—We anſwer, this " happineſs principally conſiſts in their not allowing ſocieties any *ſuperiority* one over another; " but each ſociety ſupport their own miniſtry of " their own free will, and not by conſtraint or " force upon any man's perſon or eſtate. But the " contrary that takes any man's eſtate by force to " maintain their own or any other miniſtry, it ſerves " for nothing but to provoke to wrath, envy and " ſtrife, and *this wiſdom cometh not from above, " but is earthly, ſenſual and deviliſh.*—And ſince " you wrote this letter, the conſtable of Attleborough has been taking away the eſtates of " our dear friends, and pious diſſenters to maintain their miniſter; the like hath been done " in the town of Mendon. Is this the way of " peace? Is this the fruit of your love? Why " do you hug the iniquity of Eli's ſons, and " walk in the ſteps of the falſe prophets, to *bite " with the teeth*, and cry *peace*; but no longer " than men put into your mouths than you pre- " pare war againſt them.—Since you admire our

‡ The firſt of theſe was miniſter in Boſton, the ſecond in Dorcheſter, and the third in Dedham.

" love and peace, we pray you to uſe the ſame " methods, and write after our copy: and for the " future never let us hear of your pillaging conſci- " entious diſſenters to maintain your miniſters. " You deſire that all former injury done by you " may be buried in oblivion. We ſay, far be it " from us to revenge ourſelves; or to deal to " you as you have dealt to us, but rather ſay, " *Father forgive them, they know not what they* " *do.* But if you mean that we ſhould not " ſpeak of former actions, done hurtfully to any " man's perſon, we ſay, God never called for " that, nor ſuffered it to be hid, as witneſs Cain, " Joab and Judas, are kept on record to deter " other men from doing the like." ‖

Here the public may take notice, how deſirous pedobaptiſts miniſters are to have odious things on their ſide buried out of ſight, but how contrary has their practice ever been toward us? Even to this day they can hardly preach a ſermon, or write a pamphlet for infant-baptiſm, without having ſomething to ſay about the mad men of Munſter, who they tell us rebelled againſt their civil rulers: Whereas in truth we never had the leaſt concern with them, any more than our opponents have with the Pope or Turk. Indeed they often aſſert, that thoſe mad men were the firſt that ever renounced infant-baptiſm; but there is proof enough from their own hiſtorians, that this ſtory which they have ſo often told from their pulpits, is as abſolute a falſhood as ever was uttered by man. And though

‖ Theſe extracts were carefully taken from an ancient printed copy of thoſe letters.

though one learned and pious preſident of Cambridge college, was brought to embrace our ſentiments, and to bear his teſtimony in the pulpit there, "againſt the adminiſtration of baptiſm "to any infant whatſoever;" for which he ſuffered conſiderable abuſe with much of a chriſtian temper: § While his ſucceſſor, another "very "learned and godly man," (who therefore muſt have been well acquainted with the original) held that "baptiſm ought ONLY to be by *dip*- "*ping* or *plunging* the whole body under wa- "ter: ¶ yet theſe and other honorable examples in our favor have been paſſed over, and every ſcandalous thing that could be pick'd up, has been ſpread, to prejudice people's minds againſt our profeſſion in general. And let it be remembred, that when pedobaptiſt miniſters wanted to be favored in Providence, they declared, that they could not think of the peace and love which ſocieties of different modes of worſhip have *generally* entertained one another with in that government without admiration; and they experienced ſo much of this from the baptiſts in Providence, that when ſome others made a difficulty about admitting Mr. Joſiah Cotton (the firſt miniſter of the pedobaptiſts there) as an inhabitant in the town, Col. Nicholas Powers (a leading member of the baptiſt church) became his bondſman to the town: therefore we hope that our honorable rulers and others, will be cautious about giving credit to ſtories of a contrary

§ Mr. Henry Dunſter. Vide Mitchel's life. p. 67, 70.

¶ Mr. Charles Chauncy. See an account of Plymouth church, added to Mr. Robbins's Ordination-Sermon, 1760.

trary nature, when they are told to procure or to juſtify the uſe of force in ſupporting miniſters; eſpecially ſince miniſters refuſe to ſhare in the reproach of ſuch proceedings. For a miniſter who has exerted himſelf very much of late, to ſupport the cauſe of thoſe called *ſtanding churches*, yet ſays, "It is wholly out of rule, and quite in-"jurious, to charge the *churches* or their *miniſters* "with ſending men to goal for rates,—for theſe "proceedings are evidently the acts of the *civil* "*ſtate*, done for it's own utility. The doings "of the civil authority, and of that ALONE." ‖ Where are the rulers that will ſtand *alone* in that practice, without either miniſters or truth to ſupport them!

CONCLUSION.

And now our dear countrymen, we beſeech you ſeriouſly to conſider of theſe things. The great importance of a general union through this country, in order to the preſervation of our liberties, has often been pleaded for with propriety; but how can ſuch a union be expected ſo long as that deareſt of all rights, equal liberty of conſcience is not allowed? Yea, how can any reaſonably expect that HE who has the hearts of kings in his hand, will turn the heart of our earthly ſovereign to hear the pleas for liberty, of thoſe who will not hear the cries of their fellow-ſubjects, under their oppreſſions? Has it not been

‖ Mr. Joſeph Fiſh's late piece called, *The Examiner examined*. p. 56, 59.——A reply thereto, in which that conſtitution is more diſtinctly opened, may be had at Mr. *Freeman*'s in Union-ſtreet, *Boſton*.

been plainly proved, that ſo far as any man gratifies his own inclinations, without regard to the univerſal law of equity, ſo far he is in bondage: ſo that it is impoſſible for any one to tyranize over others, without thereby becoming a miſerable ſlave himſelf : a ſlave to raging luſts, and a ſlave to guilty fears of what will be the conſequence. We are told that the father of Cyrus, tho' a heathen, " Had often taught him to con-
" ſider, that the prudence of men is very ſhort,
" and their views very limited ; that they can-
" not penetrate into futurity ; and that many
" times what they think muſt needs turn to their
" advantage proves their ruin ; whereas the Gods
" being eternal, know all things, future as well
" as paſt, and inſpire thoſe that love them to
" undertake what is moſt expedient for them ;
" which is a favor and protection they owe to no
" man, and grant only to thoſe that invoke and
" conſult them." And we are told by the ſame author, † of another wiſe heathen, who ſaid, " 'Tis obſervable, that thoſe that fear the Deity
" moſt, are leaſt afraid of man." And ſhall not chriſtians awake to a moſt hearty reverence of HIM who has ſaid, (and will ever make good his word) *With what meaſure ye meet, it ſhall be meaſured to you again.*

Suffer us a little to expoſtulate with our fathers and brethren, who inhabit the land to which our anceſtors fled for religious liberty. You have lately been accuſed with being diſorderly and rebellious, by men in power, who profeſs a great

† Rollin in his ancient hiſtory

great regard for order and the public good ; and why don't you believe them, and reſt eaſy under their adminiſtrations ? You tell us you cannot, becauſe you are taxed where you are not repreſented ; and is it not really ſo with us ? You do not deny the right of the Britiſh parliament to impoſe taxes within her own realm ; only complain that ſhe extends her taxing power beyond her proper limits ; and have we not as good right to ſay you do the *ſame thing* ? and ſo that wherein you judge others you condemn your ſelves ? Can three thouſand miles poſſibly fix ſuch limits to taxing power, as the difference between civil and ſacred matters has already done ? One is only a diſtance of *ſpace*, the other is ſo great a difference in the *nature* of things, as there is between *ſacrifices to God*, and the *ordinances of men*. This we truſt has been fully proved.

If we aſk why have you not been eaſy and thankful ſince the parliament has taken off ſo many of the taxes that they had laid upon us ? you anſwer that they ſtill claim a power to tax us, when, and as much as they pleaſe ; and is not that the very difficulty before us ? In the year 1747, our legiſlature paſſed an act to free the baptiſts in general from miniſterial taxes for ten years : yet becauſe they increaſed conſiderably, when that time was about half expired, they broke in upon the liberty they had granted, and made a new act, wherein no baptiſt church nor miniſter was allowed to have any ſuch exemption, till they had *firſt* obtained certificates from three other churches. By which the late Mr. John Procter obſerved (in a remonſtrance that he drew,

drew, and which was preſented to our court that they had as far as in them lay, " disfran- " chiſed, unchurched and uſurped an illega- " power over all the religious ſocieties of th- " people in ſaid act called anabaptiſts through- " out this province :—For where is it poſſib- " for the poor anabaptiſts to find the *firſt* three " authenticated miniſters and churches to au- " thenticate the firſt three !" So we have now related a caſe, in which a number of our brethren were put to new coſt for copies to notify others, with hope of relief to themſelves, and yet in the ſame ſeſſion of court, they had a worſe burden laid upon them than before; and their repeated cries, and then the petition of our united churches, were all rejected.

A very great greivance which our country has juſtly complained of is, that by ſome late proceedings a man's houſe or locks cannot ſecure either his perſon or his property, from oppreſſive officers. Pray then conſider what our brethren have ſuffered at Aſhfield.

Many think it hard to be frowned upon only for pleading for their rights, and laying open particular acts of encroachment thereon; but what frowns have we met with for no other crime? and as the preſent conteſt between Great-Britain and America, is not ſo much about the greatneſs of the taxes already laid, as about a ſubmiſſion to their taxing power; ſo (though what we have already ſuffered is far from being a trifle, yet) our greateſt difficulty at preſent concerns the ſubmit-

ting

ting to a taxing power in eccleſiaſtical affairs. It is ſuppoſed by many that we are exempted from ſuch taxes, but they are greatly miſtaken, for all know that paper is a money article, and writing upon it is labour, and this tax we muſt pay every year, as a token of ſubmiſſion to their power, or elſe they will lay a heavier tax upon us. And we have one difficulty in ſubmitting to this power, which our countrymen have not in the other caſe : that is, our caſe affects the conſcience, as their's does not : and equal liberty of conſcience is one eſſential article in our CHARTER, which conſtitutes this government, and deſcribes the extent of our rulers authority, and what are the rights and liberties of the people. And in the confeſſion of faith which our rulers and their miniſters have publiſhed to the world, they ſay, " God alone is Lord of the conſcience, and hath " left it free from the doctrines and command- " ments of men, which are, in *any thing* contra- " ry to his word ; or *not contained in it* ; ſo that " to believe ſuch doctrines, or to obey ſuch " commands, out of conſcience, is to *betray* " true liberty of conſcience ; and the requiring " of an implicit faith, and an abſolute blind " obedience, is to deſtroy liberty of conſcience " and reaſon alſo."

And a moſt famous hiſtorian of their's, after mentioning ſome former violations of that liberty, ſays, " The great noiſe that hath been made " in the world about the *perſecution* made in " New-England, I will now ſtop with only " tranſcribing the words uttered in the ſermon

" to

" to the firſt great and general aſſembly of the " Maſſachuſetts-Bay, after the two colonies of " Maſſachuſetts and Plymouth were by Royal " Charter united. (from 2 Chron. 12. 12.)

" Things will *go well*, when magiſtrates are " great promoters of the thing that good is, " and what the Lord requireth of them. I do " not mean that it would be well for the *civil* " magiſtrate, with *civil* penalty to compel men " to this or that *way of worſhip*, which they are " *conſcientiouſly* indiſpoſed unto. He is moſt " properly the officer of *human ſociety*, and a chriſ- " tian by non-conformity to this or that *impoſed* " *way of worſhip*, does not break the terms on " which he is to enjoy the benefits of human ſo- " ciety. A man has a *right* unto his life, his " eſtate, his liberty, and his family, although " he ſhould not come up unto theſe and thoſe " bleſſed *inſtitutions* of our Lord.—*Violences* " may bring the erroneous to be hypocrites, " but they will never bring them to be believ- " ers; no, they naturally prejudice men's minds " againſt the *cauſe*, which is therein pretended " for, as being a weak, a wrong, an evil cauſe." *

Theſe things were then delivered and were received with the *thanks* of the houſe of repreſentatives, and ten years after were ſpread by the hiſtorian thro' the nation, with the expreſs deſign of ſtoping any further complaints about New-England's perſecutions. But if the conſtitution of this government, gives the magiſtrate no other

 authority

* Magnalia, B. 7. p. 28, 29.

authority than what belongs to *civil ſociety*, we deſire to know how he ever came to *impoſe* any particular *way of worſhip*, upon any town or precinct whatſoever ? And if a man has a right to his *eſtate*, his *liberty* and his *family*, notwithſtanding his non-conformity to the magiſtrates way of worſhip, by what authority has any man had his goods ſpoiled, his land ſold, or his perſon impriſoned, and thereby deprived of the enjoyment both of his liberty and his family, for no crime at all againſt the peace or welfare of the ſtate, but only becauſe he refuſed to conform to, or to ſupport an *impoſed* way of worſhip, or an *impoſed* miniſter. †

In a celebrated oration for liberty, publiſhed laſt ſpring in Boſton, a maxim was recited which carries it's own evidence with it, which is this, NO MAN CAN GIVE THAT WHICH IS ANOTHER'S. Yet have not our legiſlature from time to time, made acts to empower the major part of the inhabitants in towns and precincts, to *give away* their neighbours eſtates to what miniſters they pleaſe !

† Many pretend that without a tax to ſupport miniſters, the public would ſuffer for want of due encouragment of uſeful learning. But *human* learning is ſurely as needful for phyſicians and lawyers, as for *ſpiritual* teachers ; and dare any deny that the affairs of law and phyſick fall more directly under the notice of the ſtate than divinity does ? why then do our legiſlature leave every man, and woman too, at liberty to chooſe their own lawyer and phyſician, and not oblige them either to employ or pay any other, though the majority may preſer them ? Can any better reaſon be rendered for this difference in conduct than this, viz. It has been found to be an eaſier matter to *impoſe* upon people about their ſouls, than about their bodies or their temporal eſtates !

pleaſe! And can we ſubmit to ſuch doctrines and commandments of men, and not *betray* true liberty of conſcience! Every perſon is or ought to be, benefited by civil government, and therefore they owe rulers honor and a tribute on that account; but the like cannot be truly ſaid of an impoſed miniſter; for as the goſpel miniſtry is an ordinance of God and not of man, ſo the obligation that any perſon or people are under to obey and ſupport any man as a miniſter of Chriſt, ariſes from the *conſideration* of his appearing to them to reſemble his Maſter in *doctrine* and *converſation*, and from the benefit which people receive under their miniſtrations. ‡ From whence the law of equity makes the free communications of our *carnal things* to Chriſt's miniſters, to be a matter that as really concerns the exerciſe of a good conſcience toward God, as prayer and praiſe do; for they are both called *ſacrifices* to him in the ſame chapter. Heb. 13. 15, 16.

Thus we have laid before the public a brief view of our ſentiments concerning liberty of conſcience, and a little ſketch of our ſufferings on that account. If any can ſhow us that we have made any miſtakes, either about principles or facts, we would lie open to conviction: But we hope none will violate the forecited article of faith ſo much, as to require us to yield a *blind obedience* to them, or to expect that ſpoiling of goods

‡ Heb. 12. 7, 17. Phil. 4. 9, 10. 1 Cor. 9. 11. Gal. 6. 6. 1 Tim. 5. 17. 18.

goods or impriſonment can move us to *betray* the cauſe of true liberty.

A late writer in the Boſton papers, has taken much pains to prove, that ſome other colonies have impoſed upon people in ſuch affairs worſe than New-England has; and to prove it he informs us, that an act for miniſters maintenance, was paſſed in New-York near eighty years ago, which ſucceeding rulers have turned to ſupport a denomination that had very few repreſentatives in court when the act was made, while the denomination who made it, have been denied any benefit from it. If ſo, how loud is the call to every man that is a friend to liberty, and who regards the good of poſterity, to riſe and exert all his influence, to demoliſh the engine which has done ſo much miſchief in all ages! We are far from trying to repreſent the fathers of New-England as the worſt of the coloniſts; We believe the contrary. But our veneration for their memory, is ſo far from reconciling us to, that it fills us with greater deteſtation of, that *myſtery of iniquity*, which carried them into ſuch acts of impoſition and perſecution as have left a great blemiſh upon their character. And ſince theſe are tedious things to dwell upon, we ſhall cloſe with this remark.

The Maſſachuſetts miniſters, in their letter to governor Jencks and other baptiſts in Providence, ſaid, We hope and pray that ancient matters that had *acrimony* unhappily in them may be buried in oblivion. Now we are told that

acrimony

acrimony ſignifies that quality in one body whereby it corrodes, eats up or deſtroys another. This *eating deſtroying* quality is truly unhappy: but how can it be buried before it is dead? The worſt of criminals are to be executed before they are buried. Therefore let this cruel *man-eater* be fairly executed, and we are ready to join heart and hand to bury him, and not to have a bone of him left for contention in all the land. If it be ſo hard to our opponents to hear of theſe matters, what has it been to thoſe who have felt their eating and deſtroying influence for theſe hundred and forty years? And how can any perſon lift up his head before God or man, and ſay he hopes to have theſe things buried, if he at the ſame time holds faſt, and tries hard to keep alive the procuring cauſe of them!

The foregoing appeal, having been examined and approved by many of his brethren, is preſented to the public, by their humble ſervant,

ISAAC BACKUS.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the above was written, I have received direct accounts, that at Montague (whoſe caſe is mentioned p. 32.) they continue from time to time, to make diſtreſs upon the principal members of the baptiſt church there, whom the law directs to ſign their certificates, while they

they let the reſt of the ſociety alone. Alſo that William White a regular member of the baptiſt church in Aſhfield, who lives in Cheſterfield, and has had his ſtanding in ſaid church certified according to law; yet had a cow taken from him on Auguſt 25, 1773, and ſold the 30th, for the pedobaptiſt miniſters rate; and that in both of theſe places, the civil charges of the town, and the miniſters ſalary are all blended in one tax (contrary as I am informed to the law of our province) ſo that our brethren who would readily pay their civil tax, yet cannot do it, without paying the miniſters alſo. Now the grand pretence that is made for the uſe of the ſecular arm to ſupport miniſters is, that thereby *equality* is eſtabliſhed among the people; but what religion, equality or equity can there be in the above proceedings!

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 9. line 12. read man. P. 12. l. 28. r. him. P. 14. l. 30. r. Julian. l. 32. r. decided. P. 15. l. 17. r. force. P. 17. l. 9. r. this. P. 21. l. 19. dele *and*. P. 26. l. 1. dele the. l. 14. r. it is. P. 31. l. 19. r. to. P. 42. l. 19. r. are. P. 44. l. 28. the word *lately* ſhould be after *and*. P. 48. l. 14. r. of. l. 20. dele of. P. 50. l. 5. r. you to us. Leſs miſtakes are left to the reader's candor.

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